DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 475 561 JC 030 231

AUTHOR	Barton, Michelle; Brown, Pamela L.
TITLE	Palomar College 1999-2000 Vocational Education Follow-Up Survey. Series Two of the Vocational Education Impact Study of Palomar Graduates.
INSTITUTION	Palomar Coll., San Marcos, CA.
PUB DATE	2002-07-00
NOTE	13p.; Completed for the Division of Vocational Technology by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. For the original Vocational Education Employer Study, see JC 030 227.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Attitudes; Community Colleges; Degrees (Academic); *Educational Assessment; Educational Objectives; *Evaluation; Followup Studies; Institutional Evaluation; Job Training; *Outcomes of Education; Participant Satisfaction; *Program Effectiveness; Success; Two Year College Students; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*Palomar College CA

ABSTRACT

This 2002 follow-up survey of vocational education outcomes for Palomar College (California) presents survey methodology and highlights of results. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning identified 590 students who earned either an Associate of Arts degree or Certificate of Achievement from a vocational education program during the 1999-2000 school year. After all students were called by phone, and ineligible or unreachable students were eliminated, 238 eligible respondents were reached. A total of 194 interviews were conducted, resulting in a response rate of 82%. Findings include (1) 84.5% of respondents indicated Palomar was their first choice in academic institutions to pursue the degree or certificate obtained; and (2) 31% indicated their overall experience was excellent and that they would change nothing, while 47% indicated their experience was very good but they would change a few things. The six top responses regarding educational goals were as follows: (1) to obtain skills for a new or different job (26.8%): (2) to improve job skills for current job (16.5%); (3) to transfer to another college or university (11.3%); (4) to prepare to change careers (9.8%); (5) to improve self (8.8%); and (6) did not know at the time, or did not clearly indicate an objective (19.6%). (NB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 475 561

Palomar College
1999-2000 Vocational Education Follow-up Survey

July 2002

Series Two of the Vocational Education Impact Study of Palomar Graduates

Completed for:

Division of Vocational Technology
Palomar College

Completed by:

Michelle Barton
Director of Institutional Research and Planning

Pamela L. Brown
Research Analyst

The Office of Institutional Research and Planning
Palomar College

JC030231

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

G. Boggs

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Office of Institutional Research and Planning (IR&P) in collaboration with the Division of Vocational Technology is currently implementing a continuous follow-up process of vocational education students and their employers. The purpose of this process is to provide feedback about the impact of vocational programs and college support services on vocational education students. The Division plans to use this feedback to improve its programs and services.

The follow-up process includes a series of three studies. Each study involves interviewing current or former Palomar College students or their employers. Specifically, in the first study, researchers interview students who earned an Associate of Arts degree or a Certificate of Achievement from a vocational program. In the second study, researchers interview the employers of former Palomar College vocational students. Finally, the third study involves interviewing current or former students who have completed coursework in a vocational program but have not earned a degree or certificate. Upon completion of each study in the series, the IR&P office provides a formal summary and feedback report to the Instruction Office, the Division of Vocational Technology, and each vocational program represented in the study.

The follow-up process is a continuous one. The three studies described above constitute one series. After completing the first series of studies, the process will begin again. As we complete multiple series of studies, the database of students and employers interviewed will grow. As this database grows, we will be able to break down interview information by program.

As part of our on-going follow-up process of vocational education students, this report summarizes the findings from our second series of studies. In this study, students were contacted who had earned either an Associate of Arts degree or a Certificate of Achievement from a vocational education program during the 1999-2000 academic year. The study was performed through an interviewing technique, in which the former students were surveyed. The surveying was conducted by the Social & Behavioral Research Institute (SBRI). During the telephone interviews, researchers addressed student attitudes regarding their vocational education program at Palomar College and how their educational experiences relate to their current career.

Overall Observations

The results of this study are extensive and provide a very detailed description of graduates' perceptions about their education experience and the impact that it has had on their lives. Some of the findings are listed below:

- The majority of respondents were generally pleased with their education and experiences at Palomar College.
- Most graduates are currently working full-time in related jobs.
- Over half of the graduates indicated that their current job directly relates to the skills they developed at Palomar.
- Faculty experience was viewed as a strength across the programs.

- Respondents identified the lack of courses offered and flexibility of class schedules as areas for improvement.

- Of the support services discussed in the survey, respondents were relatively pleased with the academic advising and counseling services, in addition to the student orientation process.

- Respondents expressed an interest in receiving more job placement assistance.

We recommend using extreme caution when interpreting and generalizing the results presented in this study. The respondents interviewed are graduates of Palomar College's vocational education programs. Thus, they are not representative of the entire college population. Further, as this study focuses solely on graduates, the respondents are not representative of all vocational education students. We are currently in the process of conducting and designing the remaining study in this second follow-up series. We recommend reviewing the results of all three studies together and over time in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the perceptions and experiences of Palomar's vocational education students.

Having expressed this concern, we do believe that the results of this study identify potential areas for improving the college's programs and services. Further, the results indicate that the college has some very real strengths in its offerings to students.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY i

INTRODUCTION 1

PROCEDURES 1
- Survey Participants 1
- Survey Methodology 2

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS 3
- General Survey Results by Topic Area 3
  - General Information 3
  - Impact of Education on Employment Status 4
  - Experience and Satisfaction with Program of Study 5
  - Experience with Non-Instructional Services 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS 7

APPENDIX A: Vocational Education Student Completer Survey A-0

APPENDIX B: Responses To Open-ended Questions B-0

List of Figures

Page

1. Current Employment Status of Respondents 3
2. Current Employment Status 4
3. Best things about the Program 5
4. Things to Change About the Program 6
5. Orientation Process Satisfaction 7

INTRODUCTION

The Office of Institutional Research and Planning (IR&P) in collaboration with the Division of Vocational Technology is currently implementing a continuous follow-up process of vocational education students and their employers. The purpose of this process is to provide feedback about the impact of vocational programs and college support services on vocational education students. The Division plans to use this feedback to improve its programs and services.

The follow-up process includes a series of three studies. Each study involves interviewing current or former Palomar College students or their employers. Specifically, in the first study, researchers interview students who earned an Associate of Arts degree or a Certificate of Achievement from a vocational program. In the second study, researchers interview the employers of former Palomar College vocational students. Finally, the third study involves interviewing current or former students who have completed coursework in a vocational program but have not earned a degree or certificate. Upon completion of each study in the series, the IR&P office provides a formal summary and feedback report to the Instruction Office, the Division of Vocational Technology, and each vocational program represented in the study.

The follow-up process is a continuous one. The three studies described above constitute one series. After completing the first series of studies, the process will begin again. As we complete multiple series of studies, the database of students and employers interviewed will grow. As this database grows, we will be able to break down interview information by program.

As part of our on going follow-up process of vocational education students, this report summarizes the findings from our second series of studies. In this study, students were contacted who had earned either an Associate of Arts degree or a Certificate of Achievement from a vocational education program during the 1999-2000 academic year. The study was performed through an interviewing technique, in which the former students were surveyed. The surveying was conducted by the Social & Behavioral Research Institute (SBRI). During the telephone interviews, researchers addressed student attitudes regarding their vocational education program at Palomar College and how their educational experiences relate to their current career.

PROCEDURES

Survey Participants

The Office of Institutional Research and Planning at Palomar College identified 590 students that earned either an Associate of Arts degree or Certificate of Achievement from a vocational education program during the 1999-2000 school year. We provided this list of students to the Social Behavioral Research Institute (SBRI) at California State University San Marcos. Palomar College contracted with SBRI to conduct the telephone surveys in this study. Interviewers attempted telephone numbers up to twenty times in an effort to reach as many of the students on the initial list as possible.

After all telephone numbers were called, 220 of the original phone numbers on the list were classified as "not eligible" for inclusion in the survey for a variety of reasons: the respondent had moved from the area with no forwarding information (137 cases); the telephone number was disconnected, a pager, or a fax machine (83 cases). Respondents who were considered "eligible" but not interviewed include 39 persons who were confirmed to be an alumnus but refused to participate in the survey and 5 who were contacted

for callbacks but were never interviewed. Thus, SBRI completed 194 interviews for this study resulting in a response rate of 82% (194 Completed Interviews/238 Eligible respondents).

Survey Methodology

Survey Development is described in length in the December 1999 report titled "The First of Three Vocational Education Student Impact Studies". As previously mentioned, Palomar College contracted with SBRI to conduct the survey. SBRI is a university research organization specializing in survey design and research. The survey addresses the four general topic areas described below:

- **General Information**
- **Employment Information**
- **Program Experiences**
- **College Experiences**

As described earlier, the survey addressed student attitudes regarding their vocational education program at Palomar and how their educational experiences relate to their current career. The survey included many types of items ranging from open-ended questions to requests for agreement with a particular statement. The survey also included many follow-up questions. For example, the final survey item asks respondents to rate their overall experience at Palomar College. When respondents did not rate their experiences as, "*Exceptional, my experience exceeded my expectations. I would not change a thing*," they were asked what they would change. Appendix A contains the final survey instrument used in the study.

Telephone interviewing commenced on July 11, 2001 and ended on October 12, 2001. During the data collection, SBRI conducted 194 interviews with Palomar College alumni. Interviewers made all telephone calls from the SBRI Survey Lab, located in Suite 140 of the San Marcos City Hall, near the CSUSM campus. Generally, interviewers placed telephone calls from 1:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00p.m. on Saturdays, and 12:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Sundays. Interviewers placed all telephone calls under the guidance of SBRI supervisory staff. SBRI's supervisory staff conducted on-line monitoring of survey calls throughout the project, both to verify the validity of the calls and for quality control purposes. SBRI made 4,988 telephone calls during the process of the project. The average length of the interviews was 19.78 minutes.

All data from the interviews were stored in a survey software and database system. The office of Institutional Research and Planning categorized and assigned codes to many of the responses from the open-ended questions. Using the coded data, we conducted simple frequency counts to describe the results of the study and establish an overall picture of what students liked about their programs and experiences at Palomar. The actual comments and responses provided by respondents are very rich in content and are worth examining in detail. These are included in Appendix B.

Note, please use caution when reviewing comments in Appendix B. Some of the comments are in response to a follow-up question that an interviewer asked when a respondent's initial answer to a question was not positive. Thus, some of the comments to the follow-up questions reflect only the few negative perceptions expressed by respondents and can lead to a biased or incorrect conclusions that a service or program feature was perceived as needing improvement. We recommend reviewing comments in Appendix B in combination with the overall ratings presented in the SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

A brief list of survey results organized by topic area is provided in addition to figures and graphs.

Survey Results by Topic Area

General Information

- 84.5% of the former students interviewed indicated that Palomar College was their first choice in academic institutions to pursue the degree or certificate program obtained.

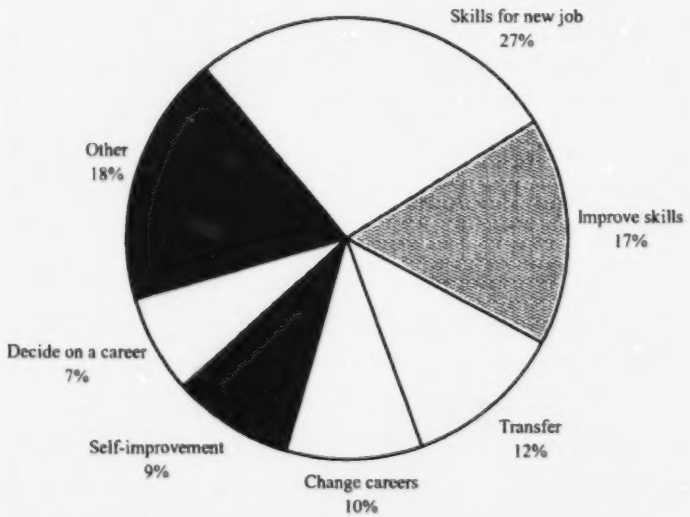
- 31.4% of respondents indicated that their overall experience at Palomar College was excellent and that they would not change a thing. 46.9% indicated that their overall experience was very good but they would change a few things

- 54.1% of the respondents surveyed were female and 45.9% were male with a mean age of 38.52

- 58% of respondents completed their degree or certificate in three years or less. 28.5% of respondents completed their program in five or more years.

- Respondents were asked what their main objective was when they enrolled at Palomar. Six of the top responses are as follows; 26.8% of the respondents indicated that they wanted to obtain skills for a new or different job, 16.5% indicated that they wanted to improve their skills for their current job, 11.3% desired to transfer to another college or university, 9.8%were preparing to change careers, 8.8% were interested in self-improvement and 7.2% wanted to explore courses to decide on a career. The remaining 19.6 of respondents did not know at that time or did not clearly indicate a main objective.

Figure 1.
Main Educational Objective



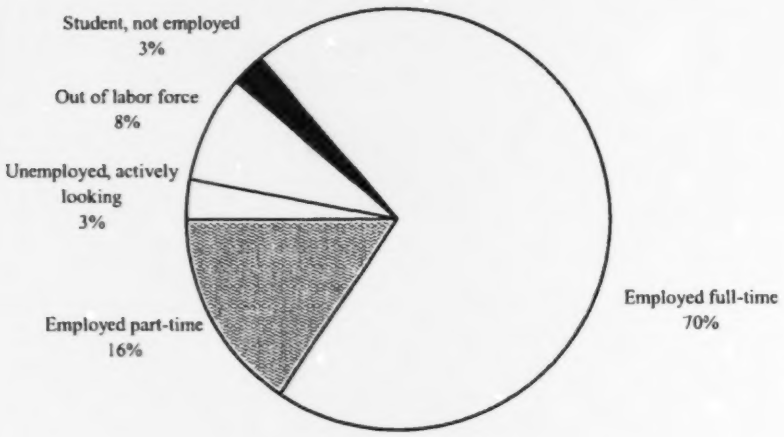
- 57.9% of respondents have not been enrolled in college since leaving Palomar.

- 34.4% of respondents were currently enrolled in college at the time of the interview.

Impact of Education on Employment Status

- 86.1% of respondents were employed. 70.1% were employed full-time. Only 3.1% were unemployed and looking for work. 2.6% were full-time non-working students. The remainder was serving in the military or out of the labor force all together.

Figure 2.
Current Employment Status



- Nearly half (49 percent) of the respondents reported earning $35,000 or more per year.

- 69.9% of respondents indicated that they receive additional benefits through their jobs such as: health and medical, dental, and retirement/pension/401k.

- Of those respondents currently working, 39.4% held their job before enrolling in a program at Palomar College. Of this group, 63.1% indicated that their experience at Palomar College changed their work situation through a promotion, increase in job responsibilities, and/or an increase in salary.

- When asked what sources helped respondents get their current job, 39.8% stated that they found their job with no help from others, 33.7% received help from family or friends, 16.9% stated that a program administrator, counselor, or instructor helped them get their job; 6% said the career center helped, and 2.5% said a Palomar College job fair helped.

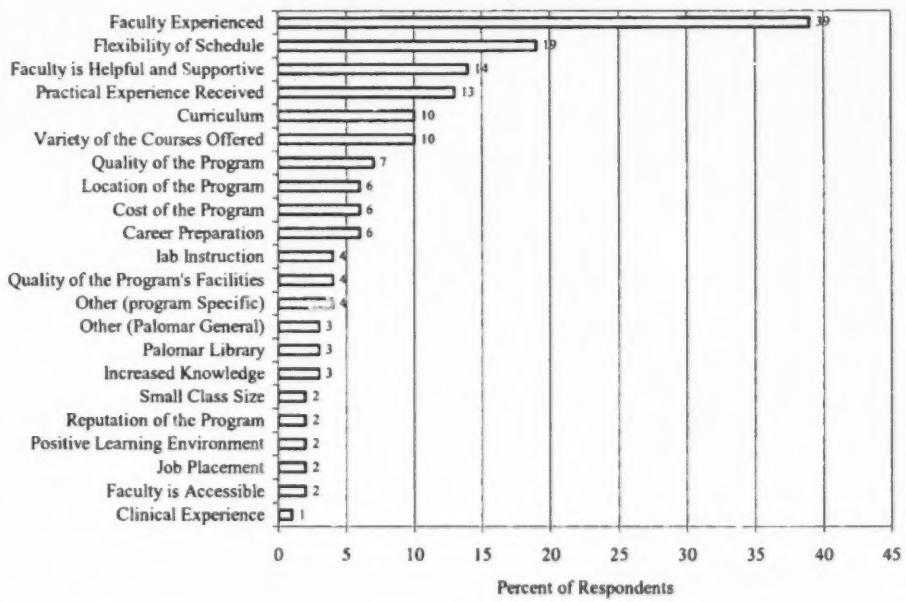
- 85% of the respondents indicated that their current job is related to the skills they developed at Palomar College.

Experience and Satisfaction with Program of Study

- We used two methods to collect information about student experiences/satisfaction with their programs of study. One method involved asking two open-ended questions regarding the three best things about a student's program and the three things about the program that the student would change. In this method, respondents offered their responses without receiving any leads or suggestions from the interviewer.

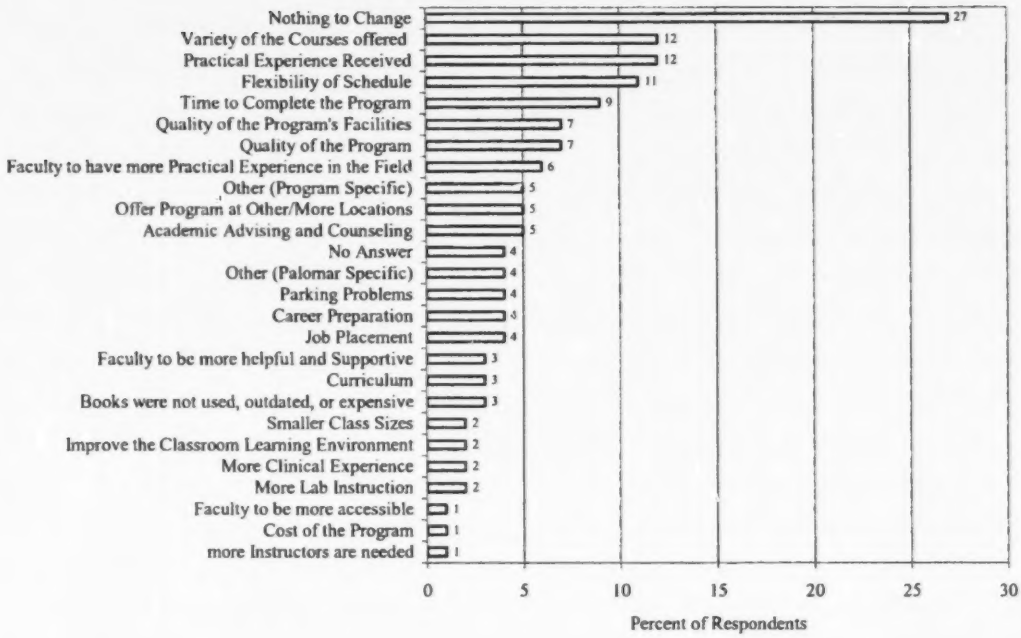
  - The top three unaided responses to the question, "What were the three best things about your program?" were: 1) faculty experience/works in field (39%), 2) flexibility of the schedule (19%), and 3) faculty is helpful and supportive (14%). The chart below describes additional information on what respondents liked about their program.

Figure 3.
Best things About the Program


Faculty Experienced 39
Flexibility of Schedule 19
Faculty is Helpful and Supportive 14
Practical Experience Received 13
Curriculum 10
Variety of the Courses Offered 10
Quality of the Program 7
Location of the Program 6
Cost of the Program 6
Career Preparation 6
lab Instruction 4
Quality of the Program's Facilities 4
Other (program Specific) 4
Other (Palomar General) 3
Palomar Library 3
Increased Knowledge 3
Small Class Size 2
Reputation of the Program 2
Positive Learning Environment 2
Job Placement 2
Faculty is Accessible 2
Clinical Experience 1
0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45
Percent of Respondents

  - The top three unaided responses to the question, "If you could change three things about your program, what would you change?" were: 1) nothing to change (27%), 2) more practical experience received (12%), and 3) more variety of courses offered (12%). The chart that follows describes additional information on what respondents would change about their program.

Figure 4.
Things to Change About the Program


Nothing to Change 27
Variety of the Courses offered 12
Practical Experience Received 12
Flexibility of Schedule 11
Time to Complete the Program 9
Quality of the Program's Facilities 7
Quality of the Program 7
Faculty to have more Practical Experience in the Field 6
Other (Program Specific) 5
Offer Program at Other/More Locations 5
Academic Advising and Counseling 5
No Answer 4
Other (Palomar Specific) 4
Parking Problems 4
Career Preparation 4
Job Placement 4
Faculty to be more helpful and Supportive 3
Curriculum 3
Books were not used, outdated, or expensive 3
Smaller Class Sizes 2
Improve the Classroom Learning Environment 2
More Clinical Experience 2
More Lab Instruction 2
Faculty to be more accessible 1
Cost of the Program 1
more Instructors are needed 1
0 5 10 15 20 25 30
Percent of Respondents

- In the second method, the interviewer read a statement to students about a general feature or component of their program. The interviewer asked students to indicate their agreement with the statement using a scale with values that ranged from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree."

  - 96.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the content of courses they completed was good. 92.1% agreed or strongly agreed that the variety of courses was good. 91.6% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the helpfulness and attention received from faculty was good. 89.4% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the quality of lecture classes was good. 87.5% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the quality of lab classes was good. 83.9% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that courses or training received are relevant to current job.

  - 14% of respondents stated a low overall satisfaction with the quality of facilities, course presentation options (e.g., TV courses, on-line courses, class room courses), and quality of on-line or TV courses.

Experience with Non-instructional Services

- The registration process received positive ratings. 81.8% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "The registration process at Palomar College is good."

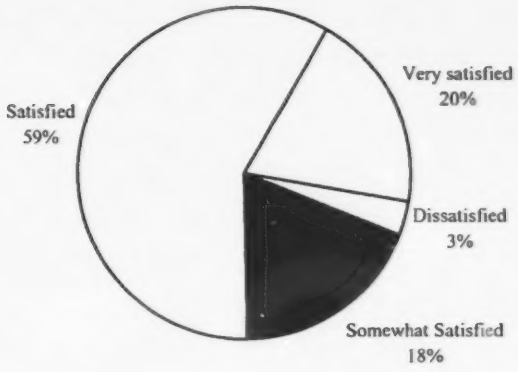
- Out of the 58 respondents who used the career center services 46 or 79.3% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the services they received.

- Academic advising and counseling also received positive ratings. Out of the 111 respondents who said they used academic advising and counseling services, 82 or 74.6% of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the services they received.

- Out of the 41 students who used the transfer center services 36 or 87.8% indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the services they received.

- Nearly half (48.9%) of respondents interviewed went through the orientation process at Palomar College. Of these, 78.1% indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the orientation process.

Figure 5.
Orientation Process Satisfaction



SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The follow-up study described in this report is part of a series of follow-up studies the IR&P office is conducting for Vocational Technology. The results of this study provide a description of graduates' perceptions about their education experience and the impact that it has had on their lives. Some of the overall findings are listed below:

- The graduates interviewed were generally pleased with their education and experiences at Palomar College.

- Most graduates are currently working in a related job or continuing with their education.

- Respondents viewed faculty as strengths across the programs, especially the fact that many faculty had experience working in their fields of study.

- A large portion of graduates indicated that they would not change one thing about their program if they were given the chance.

- Respondents identified the lack of course presentation options (e.g., on line, TV courses) and facilities/equipment as areas for improvement.

- Of the student support services discussed in the survey, respondents were relatively pleased with the registration process, career center services, academic advising and counseling, and the transfer center (although only 4th students interviewed actually used the transfer center services.

- Respondents indicated an interest in more or improved job placement assistance.

We recommend using extreme caution when interpreting and generalizing the results presented in this study. The respondents interviewed are graduates of Palomar College's vocational education programs. Thus, they are not representative of the entire college population. Further, as this study focuses solely on graduates, the respondents are not representative of all vocational education students. We are currently in the process of conducting or designing the remaining study. We recommend reviewing the results of all three studies together and over time in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the perceptions and experiences of Palomar's vocational education students.

Having expressed this concern, we do believe that the results of this study identify potential areas for improving the college's programs and services. Further, the results indicate that the college has some very real strengths in its offerings to students.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

X	This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.
	This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").